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Access to Land and Berber Ethnicity in the Middle Atlas, Morocco

BERNHARD VENEMA and ALI MGUILD

> Morocco is in a state of political paralysis... Those inclined to neglect, impede or end the process of reform and democratization should give serious consideration to the example of Algeria.
>
> Prince Moulay Hicham al-Alaoui
>
> ... newcomers will never be allowed to take advantage of us
>
> Farmer in Souk el Had

This article discusses the relationship between the indigenous settler population of the Middle Atlas of Morocco and the newcomers to the region. Most of the settlers are Tamazigh-speaking Berbers who call themselves *imazighen*, the original and independent people. The newcomers, or *abarani* as they are called by the Berbers,[1] come from other parts of Morocco and generally speak Arabic. A study of settler–newcomer relations is thus at the same time a study of relations between ethnic groups. This article seeks to chart the development of these relations during the successive stages of state formation: the Sultanate, the Protectorate, the period 1956–70 and the period from 1970 to the present day.

In the everyday language of the Middle Atlas stereotypes about Berbers, Arabs and other ethnic groups are common. The Berbers say they hate newcomers. With reference to Arabs one informant stated: 'They are the evil eye: avoid seeing them, because they may bring bad luck.'[2] Bad feelings are particularly common if newcomers are successful in their trade or occupation. A Berber informant complaining on this point ended his statement by saying: 'Strangers come today, and tomorrow they have a large family; but they will never be allowed to take advantage of us.' In a dispute between a Berber and an Arab we once heard the former shouting: '*raa arabic*', 'go to your Arab countrymen'.

Arabs also regularly use stereotypes. With reference to the Middle Atlas Berbers, one informant said: 'They live as savages in tents near caves and forests. They are nomads who use boots and plastic for clothing. They don't speak or read Arabic and don't know the Koran.'[3] Another informant said:

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'They don't think about the hereafter. They live like barbarians: they don't have a family life and their daughters are prostitutes.'[4] Other quotes could be added. This article seeks to trace the origins of these images and tensions and analyse the historical development of relations between the original Berber settlers of the Middle Atlas and the generally Arabic-speaking newcomers.

Newcomers may either be taken up in established communities or remain outsiders to a greater or lesser degree. Inclusion frequently follows a set pattern. In the first phase there is an unequal balance of power between the settler population and the newcomers, the former feeling in no way menaced. The newcomers may not be that numerous and may not operate as a group in the absence of any strong social controls. However, as the number of newcomers grows and group-forming begins, the original settlers may find their authority gradually undermined. Feeling threatened they employ a variety of means to uphold the status quo. Ultimately a new balance of power is created when the newcomers have themselves managed to become settlers.[5]

In our view, however, processes of exclusion may go on if there are important issues at stake. In the Middle Atlas tensions between the founding families and the newcomers derive from disputes about access to land and other resources. According to the Berbers, land not yet cleared is ancestral land and is their property. However, the newcomers who have settled in the area claim access too, especially those whose main occupation is farming. In the face of heavy competition with others, group identity grows. One form of identification may come to predominate and collective oppositional identities may then lead to social fragmentation rather than integration as the indigenous population 'constructs' outsiders in defence of their ancestral lands.[6]

Our main argument here is that the process of national state-building in Morocco has had a major impact on these local processes of inclusion and exclusion. The question is whether the Moroccan state has succeeded in creating a national feeling sufficiently widespread and strong to unite the vast majority of the population within one and the same political community. During the colonial era there was a long-standing policy of divide and rule between the Arabic and Berber speaking population of Morocco. In this context a key event was the enactment of the '*dahir Berbère*' law in 1930, in which the administration of justice among Berbers was taken away from the Islamic courts and assigned to the tribal councils (*jemaa*) and to French criminal law.[7]

Since independence in 1956, however, a nationalist, state–elite discourse has come to prevail that sees ethnic criteria as irrelevant, all Moroccans being equal. The central state did not and does not discriminate in its recruit-

ment for government posts, with Berbers occupying many important positions in the army and in central government, for example.[8] In recent years Berber culture has in fact come to be actively promoted by the government. In his annual speech on 30 July 2001, King Mohammed VI stated that national Moroccan identity is based on a pluralistic ethnic, cultural and linguistic reality. Because Berber culture had always been neglected, however, he announced that he himself would personally establish an *Institut Royal de la Culture Amazigh,* while the Ministry of Education would appoint staff at the universities to study and teach Berber culture and language from that year onwards. The same Ministry decided that in the first three years of primary education it would be left to the school board to decide whether to employ Berber as the language of instruction. Evidently, this is a policy of nation-building. Are there, then, any signs of growing tensions between Berber and Arabic speaking population that the government is trying to defuse.

Here we consider whether, in the Middle Atlas, there is a process of newcomer exclusion along ethnic lines. In doing so we shall first consider newcomer inclusion in the era when the Berbers of this region lived independently, under only the weak rule of the Sultanate. We shall then look at developments during the Protectorate era, which resulted in shifting criteria of inclusion and exclusion, and after independence, when successive Moroccan governments endeavoured to establish a modern nation-state and granted right of free settlement to all its citizens. Is it the case that competition between initial settlers and newcomers is becoming progressively more severe, resulting in sharper ethnic conflict between Berbers and non-Berbers?

Our research area is the northern part of the Middle Atlas, the triangle between Azrou, Ain Leuh and Timahdite, which coincides with the administrative department 'Cercle d'Azrou' and is inhabited by the Beni Mguild Berbers. The research was carried out on different occasions during the periods 1986–92 and 2000–2, with a total of twelve months' fieldwork and nine days archive research at the Archives d'Outre Mer in Nantes in 1992.

The population of the Middle Atlas was never exclusively Berber, because strangers had always been allowed to settle among them. There was a small but continuous influx of newcomers who tried to eke out an existence as shepherds, sharecroppers or guard of the grain stores.[9]

Although these newcomers were gradually integrated into Berber society, they started in a position of social inferiority. Only the descendants of the men who had helped conquer the area originally were fully fledged members of the community, and these men had a right of access to the

lineage heritage: land and water resources such as springs and lakes. Each lineage had a council (*jemaa*) to manage its land and grant permission to clear plots and give access to collective pastures. Newcomers were denied access to lineage heritage: they were not allowed to obtain or buy a parcel of land and they had no right to the collective pastures or water resources.[10]

There was always an inherent problem, however. The Beni Mguild Berbers could not tolerate 'outsiders' in their midst because they might pose a security risk in times of war. In the days before the Protectorate, that is, prior to 1912, local warfare was rife for lack of central government in the rural areas: there was rule of club law. As one informant put it: 'When we were independent there was no government and no government officials and everybody could do what they liked, provided they had enough men to help and protect them..'[11] During this era every lineage sought to have as many men as possible with a firearm and they were in no position to assign men to guard these strangers.

There was a second reason why the Berbers of the Middle Atlas were open to accepting strangers into their society. Many pastoralists, especially the wealthy, needed farm labourers and shepherds because land was plentiful while labour was limited. The subdistrict officer (*shaykh*) of Oulmes told us: 'There used to be enough land to till or feed the cattle because there were no Frenchmen or wealthy men from Azrou. Every family could clear as much land as it wanted, but only the big tents with enough men were able to do the farm work on large farms.'[12]

Probably in view of these partly conflicting priorities, the Berbers developed a traditional procedure for adopting strangers, who were allowed to settle, but only under the protection of a Berber tribesman who ensured that the newcomer behaved according to tribal customs and was loyal in times of war. During the Protectorate the adoption of strangers was a common affair. Bruno, a French researcher and lawyer, concluded at the time that: 'The *adjar*, originally an Arabic term, is a stranger, tradesman or farm labourer who is protected by an important family. With or without his dependents he is allowed to live in the tribe, where he builds his tent alongside that of his patron. Having sacrificed one or more sheep at his protector's house, the client has no further obligations.'[13] Other researchers come to the same conclusion).[14] The 'ceremony of killing sheep' (*tamghrouste*) marked the start of the adoption process.[15]

According to our informants newcomers had a socially inferior status. They were barred from participation in village meetings, where their case could only be presented by their patron. In addition, they were not permitted their own herd of cattle or to buy land. If they died without heirs, what possessions they had went to their host and patron. However, they were not obliged to participate in warfare.

Following this initial period under strict patronage, the newcomer was often granted full citizenship of Berber society. As an issue affecting the whole community, this decision was taken by the village council. In many cases the decision was taken in order to allow marriage to a local woman.[16] Becoming a full member of the community gave the man the right to a piece of land to build his house or tent and the right to clear fields. In addition, his herd was allowed access to the common pastures. The status of stranger, or *aberani*, changed to that of 'neighbour' or 'responsible man'. From now on he could participate in the Berbers' village meetings and had become one of them.

Having become a member of the community also meant that he now had several new responsibilities: he had to participate in warfare and in collective work such as repairing local irrigation channels and roads; he also had to contribute to the village funds to pay for the maintenance of the mosque, the salary of the Koran expert and blood money.[17]

Although some newcomers set up their tent encampments in the countryside, most settled in the market centres, becoming merchants trading mainly cattle, wool, butter and hides for arms, sugar, tea, henna and other products. These settlements were regularly raided by Berber bands, however, and remained fairly small until pacification of the *imazighen*. While the pastoralists themselves moved seasonally with their herds of sheep, these rural centres remained part-inhabited by guards and older members of pastoralist families, who lived in clay houses with timber roofs. The new traders built similar dwellings but in a separate ward, called a *kissaria*.

For those traders who were ambulant there was generally a lodge (*fondouk*) where a room could be rented. Temporary sojournement among the Berbers held no specific obligations. However, those traders who wished to establish themselves in one of these rural centres first had to obtain the protection of the tribal notables; he too had to seek adoption.

In our research area Azrou and Ain Leuh were the two market centres. According to Beaudet, Azrou had several hundred inhabitants at the end of the twentieth century.[18] Early immigrants here were the Ait Gheriss, from the south near Tafilalt, who became merchants. From this point onwards Azrou comprised the ward of Aqdim, inhabited by guards and elders of the Ait Amer Berbers, and a *kissaria*, called *ksar* Ait Gheriss, inhabited by the traders. Before a trader could settle he had to seek the permission of the Ait Amer leaders and by so doing became their client. Later on in Azrou, however, Sultan Hassan I made his authority felt. During his reign, from 1873 to 1894, he gave the traders permission to build a wall and left a garrison of soldiers there to protect them against raiders.[19]

The second market centre, Ain Leuh, had a ward inhabited by the Ait Abdi Berbers. Here it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that

a *kissaria* was built; until then traders had lived in tents. As in Azrou the *kissaria* was inhabited by Ait Gheriss, but also by Arabic-speaking traders from Fez and Meknes.[20] In addition, it had a ward inhabited by woodcutters. Like the traders, these woodcutters were under the protection of the Ait Abdi. They had performed the *tamghrouste* sacrifice at the door of an important member of the tribe and had thus placed themselves under his protection.[21]

It is to be concluded that during this early period, in which the central state was conspicuous by its relative absence, newcomers were incorporated into Berber society through a process of adoption. Full inclusion in Berber society occurred only gradually, however, and the Berbers, by way of the village council, ensured that only reliable newcomers joined their ranks. Once they became full members of Berber society, however, they gained access to the lineage heritage.

In the market centres of the Middle Atlas there have always been newcomers who have not sought the protection of the Berbers: ambulant traders, for example, and the occasional newcomer family member who settled without properly performing the *tamghrouste* ceremony. Virtually without exception, though, these people accepted the authority of the local Berber leaders.

With the establishment of the French Protectorate in 1912, however, the number of newcomers settling without having performed *tamghrouste* began to grow. At the start of the Protectorate era Azrou became the headquarters of the 'Cercle d'Azrou' and grew considerably in size as the French established administrative facilities and foreigners, most of whom were Frenchmen (*colons*), came in to try their luck in Morocco. As early as 1914 foreigners tried to open a sawmill in Azrou, but Commandant Colombat refused permission, being afraid of Frenchmen monopolizing the sector. In July 1917 Captain Maitrat allowed them to set up shop in Azrou, but did not allow them to buy any property. A mere six months later Captain Lefèvre told his chiefs in Meknes that so many Europeans had arrived in Azrou that a surveyor was needed to design a proper European village.[22] As a result of agriculture, trade, forest exploitation and intensive construction activities, Azrou expanded steadily during the Protectorate period. According to a French administration census, its population grew from a few hundred at the turn of the twentieth century to 1593 in 1926, 3246 in 1936 and 8494 in 1953.[23]

Ain Leuh increased in size too. With the introduction of electricity in 1924, forest exploitation increased in intensity and there was a substantial influx of newcomers, up to about 400 forest labourers settling in and around Ain Leuh each year. The ranks were swelled further by the influx of Arabs from Fez and Meknes, and between 1926 and 1947 the population of Ain

Leuh grew from 1593 to 7983. According to Dabancens the first *colons* arrived in 1948.[24] Taking up agricultural or forestry work, they were generally lower-ranking French officials who bought land for their sons or themselves because they wanted to leave the French administration.

The French authorities took care that local land tenure was left much as it was, thus leaving traditional management of common land untouched.[25] On 11 September 1914 legislation was passed granting Berber tribes the right to continue to govern themselves according to their own laws and customs under the supervision of the authorities. The French authorities consequently decreed that the collective pastures would remain common property and were not to come under private title. 'Further legislation, adopted on 27 April 1919, arranged for the common pastures to be registered, the summer pastures were first registered; but it was not until after the Second World War that the winter pastures followed.[26] Under the new ruling the boundaries of all pastures were registered and lists drawn up showing which lineages had right of access.

To meet the demands of their *colon* compatriots, however, the French authorities did not hesitate to buy private land from the Beni Mguild Berbers. This was land already cleared and usually registered as private property by the local notary. The first plots were acquired in 1920 near Azrou from the Ait Amer and Ait Arfa de Tigriga lineages; in Ain Leuh the French authorities bought land from the district head (*caid*) Amkor. By 1939 the French authorities had acquired about 1000 ha of land, and by the early 1950s some 3100 ha.[27] These so-called *lots de colonisation* were then sold to the *colons*.

In addition, the *colons* made private deals with the Berber population. In the early 1950s the *colons* had acquired an additional 3400 ha in this manner.[28] Some local notables expanded their holdings by acquiring land in the winter pastures before registration was introduced.[29] Because some of their own leaders had sold land to foreigners without consulting the lineage council, individual farmers started to do likewise. Whether official or private, in all cases colonization involved land being acquired without the lineage council being properly informed. In addition, the *colons* and tribal chiefs did not perform the *tamghrouste* ceremony nor place themselves under the protection of the Berber tribesmen, but acted purely independently.

As a consequence newcomers began to settle independently, too. Those who could afford it bought parcels of land without placing themselves under patronage. With traditional adoption customs undermined, the poorer newcomers seeking to work as labourers for a Berber farmer were no longer required to perform *tamghrouste*, merely becoming clients of the Berber farmer families. According to our informants the *tamghrouste* ceremony was no longer being performed by the end of the 1940s.[30]

The conclusion is that the French administration and foreigners (mainly

French) obtained access to land without being adopted as members of Berber society according to traditional custom. In later years rich Moroccan newcomers likewise settled independently, without placing themselves under the protection of a Berber patron and without performing *tamghrouste*; from about the 1940s onwards even the poor farmhands did not perform the ceremony. In the course of the Protectorate era, then, newcomers were no longer integrated into Berber society as had been the case previously.

In 1956 Morocco became independent and the Istiqlal party, being the symbol of the nationalist movement for independence, dominated government until the early 1960s. The successive governments started to implement a national policy of unification to do away with the differentiated Arab and Berber policies of the colonial era, especially the tradition that Berbers had been allowed to retain their customary laws. Allal Al-Fassi, the Istiqlal party leader, considered customary law to be primitive semi-law, composed of 'unwritten rules, rudimentary and impossible to uphold'. To his mind such law was almost a satanic device for undermining the influence of Islamic law.[31] By the end of 1956 the *dahir Berbère* of 1930 had already been abolished and with it the judicial competence of the tribal council.

At the same time, tribal chiefs (*caid*-s, *shaykh*-s and *moqaddem*-s) were allowed to retain their position of authority because only those that had not supported king Mohammed V after his return from Madagascar in 1955 had been removed.[32] Although they were now government officials, they continued to act as tribal representatives as their status had remained basically unchanged. In order to establish a modern bureaucracy, however, the government gradually implemented a number of policies.

In the first place the Ministry of Interior began to replace *caid*-s and *shaykh*-s by appointed officials, generally Istiqlal party men.[33] In addition, the government decreed that in rural areas justice would no longer be administered by tribal chiefs and tribal councils but by appointed junior judges (*juges-delégués*) under Istiqlal control who would apply official law rather than customary law.[34]

Second, the Istiqlal governments decided that access to tribal lands was no longer to be a matter for the lineage council and traditional overseers (*naibs*) but for the government. In fact, the Ministry of Interior, in particular the Directorate of Rural Affairs, decreed itself the sole representative of the rural population's interests and the sole institution with authority with respect to access to common land.[35]

Third, it was decreed that people were to have the right to settle freely wherever they wanted (*droit de cité*), provided they were able to provide for their own accommodation. The only responsibility of the local government

officials was to ensure that new settlers were properly registered. As one informant told us: 'After 1956 there was freedom to settle wherever you wanted. People therefore looked for a fertile location to earn a living; that was the only important thing.'[36] From then on nobody could be prevented from settling because the reply would be: 'I'm a Moroccan; I now have the same rights as you.' Our informants made the point that they fought for Moroccan independence so that everybody could live and go where they choose.[37]

The administration's move to take over control of land access and appoint local authorities met with resistance from the indigenous population and their leaders. With the new freedom of movement there was no longer any obstacle to newcomer settlement in Berber villages, blurring the distinction between *imazighen* and *aberani*. The village council could no longer rely on its own judgment to decide who could settle and who could be adopted as a member of the lineage.

From the summer of 1956 onwards dissatisfaction in the Moroccan interior began to manifest itself. In the Middle Atlas two tribal leaders took advantage of the growing resentment: Lahcen Lyoussy, a former *caid* of Immouzzer, and Mahjoubi Aherdane, a former *caid* of Oulmes. They had not collaborated with the French administration but had been active in the independence movement and had gained considerable prestige.[38] In August 1956 Lahcen Lyoussi called together a tribal gathering of several hundred Berber leaders and their followers to show their opposition to the new policies.[39]

Afraid that this would contribute to a Berber–Arab divide, the King himself pressured the tribal leaders to stop these rallies. In the spring of the following year, however, there was a Berber uprising against the Istiqlal officials. The provincial governor of Tafilalt, Lahcen Lyoussi, and a military officer called together Berber tribes, including the Beni Mguild, to instigate an armed revolt. The uprising was rapidly quelled by the army, led by (the then) Prince Hassan II, and the Beni Mguild, like other tribes, were quick to regain their homelands.

This did not put an end to the dissatisfaction among the rural population of the Middle Atlas. In 1958 the same tribal leaders who had previously expressed their resentment so forcefully, decided to go into politics in order to maintain their status. Thus, Lyoussi and Aherdane founded the political party Mouvement Populaire, which they used as a vehicle to further their political goals, including obviously the key issues that had been brought forward by the Berber population repeatedly, in particular a call for the indigenous population to be granted greater influence in their own affairs.

First, the party leaders pressed for official recognition of the Berber language and culture, arguing that most of the rural population was of Berber origin and spoke the Berber language. They therefore demanded use

of Berber as the language of instruction in primary schools and that Berber culture be given greater prominence in the mass media.

Second, the party leaders were opposed to the excessive power of the Ministry of Interior, advocating delegation of power to the local population and local functionaries. As to the latter, local people were to be recruited for official posts rather than government employees from elsewhere, mostly Istiqlal party men.

Third, although not official policy, the party leaders advised their members and councillors that access to collective land should continue to be decided by the lineage council and the *naib*-s. Thus, newcomers who had settled under the new right of free settlement were only to be granted access to collective pastures after living in the village for at least 50 years.[40]

The monarchy, not wanting to lose the support of the rural elite, encouraged the establishment of the Mouvement Populaire or 'Berber party', as is it known locally.[41] In the King's plan this Berber party was to be the backbone of a traditionalist party (Berber or otherwise) that would cooperate with the Ministry of the Interior to uphold traditional social and political structures and prevent social change. Furthermore, this traditionalist party would give the monarchy the 'democratic façade' necessary to facilitate the flow of Western economic aid.[42] As a consequence, Lyoussi, Aherdane and other Berber leaders were regularly appointed minister of one ministry or another.

Given the King's staunch support of the Mouvement Populaire and other right-wing parties, the Istiqlal party and the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires **(**UNFP**)** withdrew from government in 1962. At the local elections of 28 July 1963 the right-wing parties were therefore able to gain the majority of seats on rural councils.[43]

The conclusion is that although after independence successive Istiqlal governments tried to establish a modern administrative bureaucracy, Berber tribal elders, some of them 'local godfathers', put up considerable resistance, resulting in militant rallies and the establishment of the Mouvement Populaire. Against a background of rural unrest the monarchy sided with these tribal leaders, resulting in conservative parties winning the local elections of 1963 and creating scope for revitalizing traditional tribal institutions and customary law.

From 1956 on tribal chiefs were formally no longer representatives of their tribe but district officers of the Ministry of Interior. Their appointment and career would henceforth depend on their professional qualifications and record. Due to the unrest in the rural areas the ministry was rather prudent in appointing outsiders and in the Middle Atlas many local Berber leaders were appointed district officer.[44]

Fearing that the new government policy might soon break the resistance of the Berber party leaders, implying a loss of control over land tenure and an undermining of their influence, some of these local officials adopted a policy of driving out newcomers. One such official was the district officer of the Ait Ichou ou Ali. Between 1956 and 1958 he drove away many Saharaoui and Arabs who had settled in the area without a Berber as a local patron, arguing that they were intruders. He was not the only one. Another influential Berber who acted likewise was one of the notables from Ait Amy Driss. He was an *ancien combatant* who had trained at the Dar el Beïda military academy and served as an officer in the Moroccan army from 1956 to 1974. Between 1956 and 1970 he too drove independent Arab and Saharaoui settlers off the commons and forced them to sell any land owned as private property.

The conduct of these and other local notables set an example to the common Berber farmers, who also started to oppose the non-indigenous population who had settled without performing the ceremony of *tamghrouste*. As one informant said: 'The strangers wanted to strangle us on our own land and break the bond with our forefathers who shed their blood in battles over borders.'[45] The line taken by most lineage councils and *naib*-s was that those who had not been traditionally adopted or performed *tamghrouste* as well as descendants of those who had not performed the ceremony were not deemed to part of the indigenous population. As such, they were barred from membership of the lineage council and from grazing their cattle on the commons. Free, unsubordinated settlement thus came to mean exclusion from the Berber community with its associated equal rights.

There were exceptions to this exclusion, however, and 'outstanding' newcomers might be invited to attend the meeting of the village council, as with particularly pious men such as those organizing the ritual sacrifices (*sadaka-s*) on the many holy days. More broadly, only those were eligible who had behaved appropriately towards the 'original *imazighen*' by helping to solve conflicts, donating to the village fund and, if rich, helping the needy by providing loans. It was the well-off newcomers in a position to pay for frequent *sadaka-s* and help the community financially, in particular, that were invited to the meetings of the lineage council. As one informant said: 'In every village newcomers from elsewhere may take part in the lineage meetings if they help pay the salary of the *fqih* [Koran expert] and organize *sadaka-s*. They can have access to our pastures if they are well-mannered. If not, they are excluded.'[46]

As members of the lineage councils, these newcomers helped decide on a variety of community issues, including rural council candidacy, the salary of the *fqih* and access to the common pastureland. They themselves have often obtained access to these pastures, as the following examples show.

Case 1
Haj Moulay Aziz is a descendant of a *shorfa* family from Tindjad. His father settled in Souk el Had without performing the ceremony of *tamghrouste*. He became a seasonal labourer in France, where he worked for many years. He was able to buy a sizeable tract of land and his sons successfully intensified farm operations by buying a tractor and starting aboriculture. The family is well-off: they own a Peugeot 405 and several houses, which they let. The cattle are allowed to graze the commons. He has travelled to Mecca and bears the title El Haj. Whenever he returns he prays in the mosque and organises *sadaka* on the holy days to honour the forefathers. He tries to settle conflicts by applying Koranic law, even mediating in conflicts between settlers and newcomers concerning access to the commons.

Case 2
Moulay Mustapha is another descendent of a *shorfa* family from Tinjdad whose father settled in the area without performing *tamghrouste*. Moulay now lives among the Ait Boubker, near the hamlet of Faliba. He is a rich farmer, owning a tractor with which he ploughs the fields of other farmers. He has access to the collective pastures and has even built stables there. He is a religious man, attending all the prayer services, and is much respected for his pious learning. He is a member of the lineage council of Faliba and helps decide on community affairs and resolve conflicts among lineages.

Thus the actual newcomers are not accepted as full members of the Berber community. Only those who are subservient to the community are allowed to become a member. So only under certain circumstances can non-indigenous people become members of a Berber community and enter the commons. Not all newcomers are accepted as full members of the Berber community or granted access to the commons, only those who have conformed fully with community standards. There are many Arab families who have lived for more than a generation in the area who have no access to the commons.[47] Newcomers considered to behave in too individualistic a manner by pursuing solely their own interests are isolated and may even have to leave the community as a result.

The conclusion is that the lineage councils have responded defensively to the government's policy of free settlement. Thus, newcomers who have not been adopted by traditional custom or descend from a family that has performed the *tamghrouste* ceremony are not allowed to become a fully-fledged member of the local community but are regarded as intruders. Only those who serve the community by their religious learning, by helping with conflict resolution and contributing amply to village funds enjoy the same rights as the original settlers.

Non-indigenous men who have gained respectability and helped the community may thus become members of the lineage council and can as such exert considerable influence. They are even allowed to occupy official positions in the community, up to and including village head. This has happened in some of the rural centres, where there are many newcomers who can support candidacy from among their own ranks. In the market centre, Souk el Had, for example, the current *moqaddem*, Si Abdallah, is not from the indigenous Berber population but descends from a Saharaoui family from Gourama. His parents settled in Souk el Had, where Si Hassan was born, and he is fluent in the Berber language. He is well known for listening to people's problems and for the help and advice he provides and has therefore been invited to attend village council meetings.

On certain issues he holds a different opinion from the Berber population, however, arguing for example that the commons should be allocated among all the inhabitants of the village, whether indigenous or not. Given this and other opinions, he is affiliated with the Istiqlal party. However, he does not intervene directly in disputes about access to land. He told us that this is a national affair and that he has no right to intervene. At the moment he leaves problems of access to the discretion of the *naib* and the lineage council, almost all of whom are indigenous Berbers.

Today non-indigenous councillors often have a seat on the (elected) rural councils, as is the case throughout the communities of the Middle Atlas. In the period 1995–7 the village council of Souk el Had had 13 members. All were indigenous with the exception of two councillors, a teacher and coffee house owner originally from the south, and a second teacher, from Kelaa Seraghna, both representing the USFP party. Between 1997 and 2002 the council consisted of 15 council members, all representing the Mouvement Populaire, with two exceptions: the teacher from Kelaa Seraghna, again representing the USFP, and a Zayane shopkeeper representing the Istiqlal party.

In contrast to the council members representing the Mouvement Populaire, these councillors hold the opinion that the collective pastures should be open to all. If this means a risk of overgrazing, they argue, the pastures should be rented with the revenues divided equally among the entire village population. At the moment some of the winter pastures are rented, with the rent being divided among the indigenous population, and they argue that these funds should likewise be divided among the entire population. Once again, though, the non-indigenous council members do not intervene directly, arguing rather that the government should play a role alongside the lineage council and the *naib*. They consider it to be a matter between the *naib*-s on the one hand and the district officers who hold the archives of the communal lands (*cartes des conservations foncières*) on the other. The former are able to identify the traditional owners of the commons and the latter which newcomers have right of access according to official decrees.

The number of Berber councillors representing the Mouvement Populaire is expected to decline in the local elections of 2002, because today many people are dissatisfied about the achievements of the rural council of Souk el Had. One informant told us: 'Souk el Had is the Kuwait of Morocco, but hardly anything has been achieved. Those responsible for the council funds have betrayed their position by frequently pocketing the money.'[48] Many informants believed that the number of councillors not representing the Mouvement Populaire will increase in the 2002 elections and that this may weaken the influence of the indigenous population.[49] In positions of authority, such as village head or councillor, newcomers may therefore in the long run extend the influence of the non-Berber population.

Moreover, today's district officers contribute to the growing influence of the newcomers. In the Middle Atlas these officials have generally been recruited from the Ecôle de Perfectionnement de Cadre at Kenitra since the 1970s rather than from the local population. In general these district officers comply with government decrees regarding access to collective pastures,[50] which grant newcomers access to collective pastures and winter pastures if they have lived in the area for a generation or longer and have agriculture as their main occupation. Those born in the area have automatic access. As the district officer of Timahdite said: 'Not allowing newcomers into the lineage heritage causes problems, obliging them to return to their home areas, which will create still more problems.'[51]

Newcomers may take their case to court if the indigenous population does not comply with the orders of the local officials in these matters of government legislation.

Case: the son of an overseer (*naib*) and a non-indigenous shepherd. In early 2001 the son of a *naib* of Toufestalt found an Arabic Ait Khaoua shepherd with his flock on the Narten collective pasture. He told him to move off because he had no right to graze his sheep there. The latter reportedly answered: 'Long live democracy! We also have a right to this land. We have been living in the midst of the *jemaa* of Ait Mouli for a long time already, so what can you do to me?'

The Berber attacked him with a sickle, wounding him on his back, head and knees, and leaving him unconscious. Other Ait Khaoua men came to his rescue and took him to the hospital of Ain Leuh, where first aid was given before he was transferred to the larger hospital at Azrou. Many Ait Khaoua men accompanied him and surrounded the hospital, shouting that they would take revenge.

The police decided to look for the son of the *naib* and he was brought before the local court. He was given two months' imprisonment and a fine of 6000 dirham. The Ait Khaoua were not satisfied with this punishment

and attacked the *naib*'s second son, who also had to be hospitalized. They also took the case to the higher court (*cour d'appel*) in Meknes. A year later no legal decision had been taken.[52]

The growing role of government officials and courts in matters of land access has necessarily reduced the influence of the *naib*-s and lineage councils. Because local management is gradually being transformed into state management, the collective pastures are becoming open-access commons because the rules of access have become unclear. Many Berbers themselves now enter into secret and informal contractual relationships with newcomers, especially those who have slid into poverty. These poor Berbers let their right of access to newcomers, especially as they have no herd themselves. This is profitable for both parties: newcomers now have access to the pastures, and by providing shepherding services the Berber farmer is remunerated with one-quarter of the new lambs and wool. Among the Ait Arfa Berber, 19.1 per cent of the Ait Arfa pastoralists engage in herding in association with outsiders, while 24.1 per cent of the total sheep herd is under the annual tenure system .[53]

The conclusion is that influential newcomers are able to express different opinions about land access and are more ready to adhere to government rulings. They enjoy the support of the local government officials, who are no longer recruited from the Berber population. If the Berber population provokes newcomers by denying them access to the commons, the latter may even now take their case to court to have their official rights recognized. Gradually, therefore, newcomers are beginning to assert themselves and obtain granted access to the Berber commons. Access to land and to influential positions shows that newcomers belonging to a different ethnic group are gradually being included in Berber society. Contrary to the period prior to the Protectorate they are now able to uphold their own position on the crucial issue of land access.

Our main argument here has been that the processes of inclusion in and exclusion from Berber society are heavily influenced by the process of state formation. As this article shows, however, there are also local processes at work. The Berber population has a variety of interests of its own and acts accordingly. Some members of the original settler population let their grazing rights to outsiders, which exacerbates feelings of distrust and undermines the authority of the Berber lineage council. In addition, the indigenous Berbers have great respect for well-educated Arabs such as teachers, *shorfa* and Koran experts. These and other newcomers who behave respectfully towards the lineage council and contribute to the village funds can become member of the council and gain access to the commons.

However, state formation is a crucial variable in explaining the processes of inclusion and exclusion. When the Berbers were still fairly independent of the authority of the Sultanate, newcomers were integrated into Berber society by adoption, only becoming full members of the community and gaining access to land after a certain period of time. By force and for reasons of economic greed, the new foreign rulers of the Protectorate have disregarded the traditions surrounding land access and settlement, an example followed by some tribal leaders. This disruption of Berber society meant that newcomers were able to settle independently, the poorest among them becoming clients of their Berber landlords, but without performing the ceremony of *tamghrouste.* Under the impact of the new power constellation, the custom of adoption was undermined.

However, after independence, there were clear attempts by the government to monopolize decisions regarding land issues and settlement. Tribal leaders strongly opposed the new government policies and set up the Mouvement Populaire, using the party ideology of local autonomy to increase their influence. In consequence, recently arrived settlers who had settled independently were barred from access to the commons and from official positions.

Since the 1970s government influence has been on the increase. Moroccan government bureaucracy has become a dominant player because tribal notables, such as local government officials, have been replaced by trained career officials. Official rules about access to the commons are being implemented more and more because newcomers now feel they are in a position to seek support from the courts or local government authorities. Although there have been individual cases of violence, most newcomers consider that they now have more room for manoeuvre. It can therefore be concluded that there is no Berber–Arab ethnic conflict because social realities offer scope for overcoming traditional ethnic boundaries.

Our hypothesis is that the speech of King Mohammed VI about the need to attach greater importance to Berber culture is probably based more on the success of the Amazigh movement in Algeria. Following several large-scale rallies there, the Berbers succeeded in getting their language officially recognized in 2001. The King was probably afraid that the Amazigh movement in Morocco could become a political movement, too. However, Arab–Berber differences in the Middle Atlas do not appear to be a breeding ground for a political movement: the Mouvement Populaire and its call for local autonomy are not strong enough to create an ethnic nationalist movement.

From the above it follows that there is no strong Berber consciousness in the Middle Atlas and that an ethnic Berber movement will remain weak. This does not mean that Berbers do not despise newcomers and gossip about

them. What is probably more important is that there is a sociopolitical crisis in Morocco, as argued by Prince Moulay Hicham al-Alaoui. The absence of economic and political change seems to be more fundamental than ethnic divisions.

NOTES

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1. In Arabic the term is *berani*, literally 'stranger'. However, in the research area the Berbers use the term to indicate (unrelated) people who have come to settle in the area. It is thus a narrower term than 'stranger'.
2. Farmer in Toufestalt, 24 Oct. 1989.
3. Shopkeeper in Ain Leuh, 24 Sept. 1987.
4. Teacher in Sidi Addi, 24 Sept. 1990.
5. N. Elias and J.L. Scotson, 'D*e Gevestigden en de Buitenstaanders*' (The Hague: Reward, 1976).
6. I. Kopytoff (ed.), '*The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Society*' *(*Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); P.Geschiere and T. Nyamnjoh, 'Capitalism and Autochtony: the Seesaw of Mobility and Belonging', *Public Culture*, Vol.12, No.2 (2000), pp.423–52.
7. R. Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule. French Administration of Tribal Areas, 1912–1956* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1973), pp.48–61, 270–5.
8. A. Ben Kaddour, 'The Neo Makhzan and the Berbers', in E. Gellner and C. Micaud (eds.), *Arabs and Berbers. From Tribe to Nation in North Africa* (London: Duckworth, 1972), pp.259–67; A. Hammoudi, '*Master and Disciple. The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism*' (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p.28.
9. J. Dabancens, 'Les Ait Abdi du Moyen Atlas, et leurs réactions au contact des étrangers', *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, Vol.4 (1951), pp.101–18; G. Beaudet, 'Les Beni M'Guild du Nord. Etude Géographique de l'Evolution Récente d'une Confédération Semi-nomade', *Géographie du Maroc*, Vol.15 (1969).
10. Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial*, p.273.
11. Shaykh of Ait Hamza, 26 Nov. 1986.
12. Interview, 6 Feb. 1991.
13. H.Bruno, 'Notes sur le Statut Coutumier des Berbères Marocains (Iguerouan du sud, Ait Ndir, Ait Mguild)', *Achives Berbères* Vol.1, No.3; Vol.2, Nos.3 and 4 (1917), p.186 (author's transl.).
14. W.P. Boyle, *Contract and Kinship: the Economic Organization of the Beni Mguild Berbers of Morocco* (Ann Arbor: Un. Microfilms International, 1977), p.181; Ben Daoud, 'Notes sur le Pays Zaian', *Archives Berbères,* Vol.2, No.2 (1917), pp.278, 288.
15. The Arabic term for this ceremony is *debiha.*
16. Ben Daoud, 'Pays Zaian', pp.290, 291, 299; Bruno, 'Statut Coutumier', pp.186, 192, 302, 303; Beaudet, 'Beni M'Guild', p.18.
17. Archives Nantes, Section Outre-Mer, Direction des Affaires Indigènes, dossier 407, Ait Arfa.
18. Beaudet, 'Beni M'Guild', p.71.
19. Segonzac de, *Voyages au Maroc* (Paris: Libr. Armand Colin, 1903).
20. Dabancens, 'Les Ait Abdi', p.105; Beaudet, 'Beni M'Guild', p.70.
21. A. Bernard, 'Les Forêts de Cèdres de l'Atlas Marocain', *France-Maroc*, Vol.12 (1917).
22. Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule*, p.43.
23. Beaudet, 'Beni M'Guild', p.71.
24. Dabancens, 'Les Ait Abdi', p.107.
25. Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule*, p.203.

26. Beaudet, 'Beni M'Guild', p.22.
27. The research area is 293,000 ha, uncultivated land and forests included, in 'Monographie de la Province d'Ifrane' (Rabat: Province d'Ífrane, Ministère de l'Intérieur, 1983).
28. Beaudet, 'Beni M'Guild', pp.21, 24, 57.
29. Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule,* p.318; Ben Kaddour, 'Neo Makhzan', pp.261, 262.
30. Dabancens, 'Les Ait Abdi', p.102.
31. Cited by N. Bouderbala, 'Loi et Société au Maroc: le cas des terres collectives', *Bulletin Economique et Social du Maroc*, Vols.159, 160, 161 (1987), p.63 (author's transl.).
32. D.E. Ashford, *Political Change in Morocco* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp.137–44, 192.
33. Istiqlal party men served as Minister of the Interior from 28 Oct. 56 to 23 May 1960.
34. Ashford, *Political Change,* pp.115, 194; A. Coram, 'The Berbers and the Coup', in E. Gellner and C. Micaud (eds.), *Arabs and Berbers. From Tribe to Nation in North Africa* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p.271; O. Bendourou, *Le Pouvoir Exécutif au Maroc depuis l'Indépendance* (Cahors: Publisud, 1986), pp.66, 67.
35. D.Basri, *L'Administration Territoriale. L'Expérience Marocaine* (Paris: Bordas, 1986), p.113.
36. Secondary school teacher at Azrou, 11 Sept. 1990.
37. The same happened in the High Atlas. As an Ait Morghad pastoralist contended: 'We armed ourselves, went hungry, left our homes and sacrificed all we had so we could become independent, roam freely and cast off the oppressive chains of the Christians and their friends' (quoted in H. Ilahiane, 'The Berber Agdal Institutions: Indigenous Range Management in the Atlas Mountains', *Ethnology*, Vol.38, No.1 (1999), p.39).
38. They had been the founders of the 'Armée de Liberation Nationale' (ALN) in 1955, becoming leaders of the Middle Atlas section. Following independence they also obstructed French transports from Morocco to Algeria and attacked French posts.
39. Ashford, *Political Change*; Bendourou, *Pouvoir Exécutif,* pp.66, 67.
40. Chairman of the rural council in Timahdite, 29 Oct. 1989; member of rural council of Ain Leuh, 15 Sept. 1990; Ashford, *Political Change,* p.321.
41. R. Leveau, *Le Fellah Marocain, Défenseur du Trône* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1976).
42. Ben Kaddour, 'Neo Makhzan', p.263.
43. J.-C. Santucci, 1985, *Chroniques Politiques Marocaines (1971–1982)* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1985), p.20 ; Bendourou, *Pouvoir Exécutif,* p.32; Ben Kaddour, 'Neo Makhzan'.
44. Among the Ait Abdi: *Caid* Mouhi N'Baali, Ait Ichou ou Ali (Berber): 1956–8; *Caid* Mouha ou Haddou n'Bouazza, Ait Arfa (Berber): 1958–63; Among the Irklaouan: *Caid* Haddou ou Akka (Berber): 1956–60; In Azrou: *Chef de Cercle* Azrou: a Berber from the Middle Atlas: 1965–73; *Chef de Cercle* Azrou: a Berber from the Middle Atlas: 1973–?; Mayor of Azrou: son of Berber *caid* Said: 1956–70; Mayor of Azrou, a Berber: 1970–89; In Meknes: Governor of Meknes: a Berber from the Middle Atlas: 1964–70.
45. Farmer in Ait Hamza, 23 Nov. 1988.
46. Farmer in Timahdite, 22 Nov. 1988.
47. L.B. Venema, 'Ecological Crisis and Local Power Constellations: the Case of the Middle Atlas', in *La Recherche Scientifique au Service du Développement*; Colloques et Seminaires, No.22 (Rabat: Université Mohammed V, Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 1992), p.315.
48. Cattle trader Souk el Had, 22 Oct. 2001.
49. A researcher pointed to the weakness of the party, too: 'Le MP n'a jamais pu or su dépasser le stade d'un syndicat de notables berbères, originaire surtout du Moyen Atlas, défendant des interêts locaux ou des positions acquises, totalement prisonnier du jeu politique de la Monarchie.' (S. Chaker, 'La Voie Etroite: La Revendication Berbère entre Culture et Politique', in M. Camau (ed.), *Changements Politiques au Maghreb (*Paris: Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques, 1991), p.286.
50. T. El Khyari, *Agriculture au Maroc* (Editions OKAD, 1987), p. 254.
51. Interview, 7 Feb. 1991.

52. Personal observation, Mguild 10 May 2001. See for a similar case, L.B. Venema, 'De Verbindingen tussen Lokaal en Centraal Gezag in de Midden Atlas, Marokko', *Sharqiyyât*, Vol.13, No.2 (2001), pp.145–66;
53. A. Bencherifa and D.L. Johnson, 'Changing Resource Management Strategies and their Environmental Impacts in the Middle Atlas Mountains of Morocco', *Mountain Research and Development*, Vol.3 (1991), p.411; A. Hanafi, *La Mutation Economico-Sociale de la Tribu Semi-nomade Irklaouan (Moyen Atlas)*, Thèse 3eme Cycle (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, U.E.R de Géographie, 1984), p.273.